

Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat

JUNE 1983

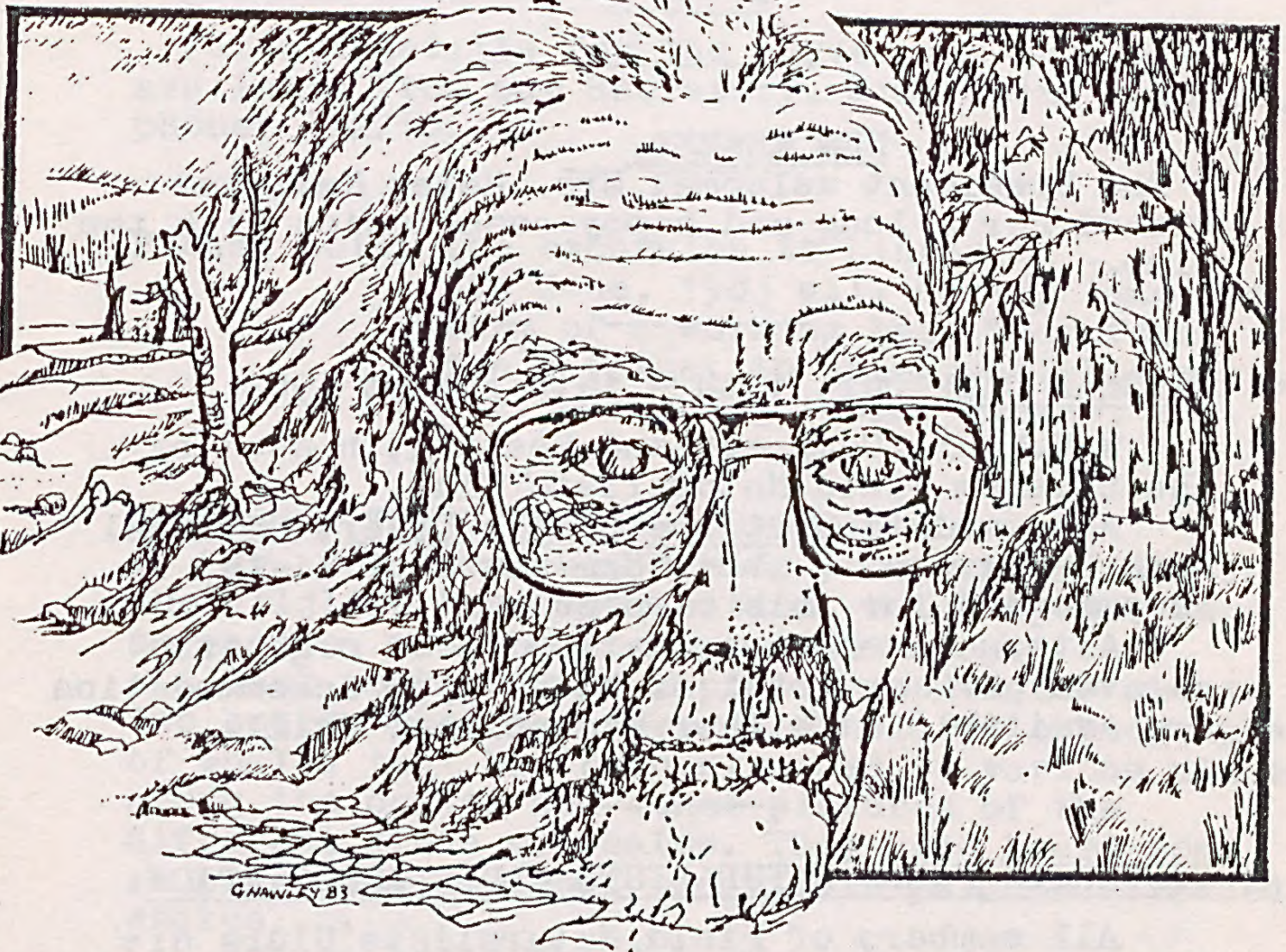
EXCURSION - NEWS SHEET

Meeting: 3rd June - Stella Bedggood Memorial Lecture -
"Man, Biology and the Evolution of
Landscapes", Speaker: Prof. G. Seddon,
Venue: St. Paul's Hall 8pm.

Meeting: 1st July, "Hunting and Gathering Techniques and
Artifacts of Aborigines" Speaker:
Mr. J Morris.

Excursion: 5th June, Linton, Full Day, Leader Mr. R. Thomas.

Excursion: 3rd July, Enfield, Fungi, Leader Mrs. F. Chuk.
Half Day.



President: Dr F. HARRAP Phone 301651
Vice-pres: Mr W. MURPHY Phone 323289
Secretary: Miss H. BURGESS Phone 312210
Treasurer: Mrs F. WILLIAMSON Phone 327631
Editor: Mrs P. MURPHY Phone 323289

Meetings are held 1st floor S.M.B.
Barkly Street Annexe 7.30 p.m.

EXCURSIONS, AS SPECIFIED, COMMENCE FROM
CROCKERS, Cnr. STURT and ARMSTRONG STREETS,
BALLARAT, AT 9.30 am FOR FULL DAY OUTINGS.
OR AT 1.30 pm FOR HALF DAY

REPORTS: (May Meeting.)

- Mrs. E. Fry - two flame robins in Russell Square.
- Mr. P. Fry - six white-naped honeyeaters in his garden in Stawell St.
- Mr. R. Thomas - immature or female pink robin at P.O.C. block, Linton. This sighting is a first record.
- Mr. P. Hope - fat koala at his home in Buninyong.
- Mrs. M. Tonkin - four plovers in Boak Avenue, Mt. Helen.
- Mrs. G. Manguss - crimson rosellas in Pryor St.
- Mr. G. Jamieson - menace of European Paper Wasp spread to Bacchus Marsh.
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NEW MEMBER.

The President welcomed Mrs. Helen Neal and wished her a long and happy association with the club.

HORSHAM CAMP OUT, 12th - 14th August 1983.

W.V.F.N.C.A. Camp-out and Meeting, hosted by the Horsham Field Naturalists' Club.

Accommodation at the Little Desert National Park Campground (about 8km south of Kiata) is recommended for this camp-out. .

Alternative accommodation at an organized caravan park or motel or hotel type accommodation are available at either Dimboola or Nhill.

VICTORIAN FIELD NATURALISTS CLUBS ASSOCIATION.

All members of Field Naturalists' Clubs are invited to the:

SPRINGTIME GET-TOGETHER OF ALL CLUES -

8th, 9th October, 1983, at Ocean Grove Motel
(and Motel Caravan Park), 64 Wallington Road,
Ocean Grove. Phone: (052) 551253.
(1.2km from Post Office.)

BALLARAT CAMP-OUT 14th - 16th October, 1983.

W.V.F.N.C.A. Camp-out and Meeting, hosted by
the Field Naturalists' Club of Ballarat.
Venue: Lady Northcote Camp on Glenmore Road,
approximately 16km west of Bacchus Marsh.

Areas to be explored will probably include
the Werribee Gorge, Mallee country near Lake
Merrimu and an interesting area off the Ballan -
Ingliston Road.

Further details for the above camp-outs are
available from our Secretary, Miss Helen Burgess,
phone: 312210.

Please note: the excursion to Linton on
5th June, 1983 will mostly take the
form of a working bee. Therefore,
don't forget to bring suitable gear,
e.g. gardening tools, gloves, etc.

WHALES ON THE VICTORIAN COASTS.

Mr. Bob Warnecke, Senior Research Officer in
the Wildlife Research Section, Ministry for Con-
servation, was the speaker on 6th May.

Club members were kept interested for about
two hours. They saw several excellent photographs
of whales that had been stranded at various places
along the coasts and other pictures of the
different kinds of whales. They also heard some
amusing stories about the visits paid to stranded
whales.

In the early decades of last century, Right
Whales were harpooned from open boats at Portland,

but the "industry" collapsed about 1840. There was very little scientific interest in whales until the late Norman Wakefield began to study the records of stranded whales. Mr. Warnecke became interested in a stranded Strap-Toothed Whale at Griffith Is. near Port Fairy and said that he "had been chasing stranded whales ever since."

Many stranded whales are old and often are in poor condition. The Wildlife Research Section will, in the near future, issue general advice for people who see stranded whales. Attempts at rescue are often very difficult, e.g. sometimes when a whale is taken to deep water it will move back to the beach again. It is hoped that veterinarians will be called to give advice. Often the best thing to do in the early stages is to shield the whale from the sun and keep the flippers as cool as possible with water or even with ice packs.

Mr. Warnecke was optimistic that the policy of complete protection would save many species from extinction. The Right Whale had been completely protected since 1937 and the species was now appearing strongly in South Africa and South America. He hoped that in a decade or so they would be again seen frequently in Australian waters. The female comes close to the coast to calve.

In answering a question, Mr. Warnecke gave a brief account of how whales use an echo sounding system to help them keep away from coasts. He has a theory that special features of the coasts near Macquarie Harbour (Tas.), Sawyer Bay (Tas.) and Portland (Vic.) cause whales to obtain the wrong information and then some of them become stranded.

All in all a fascinating address!

H. Hooper,
I. Hooper.

EXCURSION TO THE DEVILS KITCHEN AND THE WOODY-
YALOK CREEK, May 8th, 1983.

Fourteen members of the club took part in

this excursion, some departing and others arriving at lunch time. The day was pleasant, with little wind and no rain.

It's always interesting to compare one day's visit to an area with another. On the previous day I carried out a pre-excursion check and saw no birds of prey. On the 8th, we saw a peregrine falcon on two occasions at the Kitchen, a goshawk again, twice, two wedge-tail eagles and a brown hawk.

We started the day high above the Kitchen, on the eastern perimeter, and then walked down into the parking area. Here we checked on the few well established *Correa glabra* plants and the various ferns listed for the area.

Peter Fry then took us south and back into a track leading to the creek; fortunately we stopped before the track finally deteriorated. We walked from here to a ridge overlooking the creek. The scenery was very fine with a ford and with evidence of mining tunnels in the eastern slope.

We then drove via Racecourse Road to the Crossing, where we had lunch before a walk down the creek. During and after lunch we saw flame and scarlet robins, golden whistler, grey shrike thrush, brown and white throated tree creepers and restless flycatchers.

Other birds seen during the afternoon included white eared and New Holland honeyeaters, eastern shrike tit, eastern and crimson rosellas. In all, the days total was forty species.

Plants that were of interest during the day included:

Correa glabra - Smooth Correa (rocky cliff),
Carpobrotus glabra - Noon Flower (hanging down cliff)
Bursaria spinosa - Sweet Bursaria
Acacia retinodes - Wirilda
Callistemon paludosus - Swamp Bottle-Brush
Asplenium flabellifolium - Necklace Fern
Hymenanthera dentata - Shrubby Violet Bush
Chrysanthemoides monilifera - Boneseed

Cynoglossum suaveolens - Sweet Hound's tongue,
Sambucus nigra - European Elderberry,
Galium asperine - Cleavers,

Eucalyptus camaldulensis - River Red Gum,
Eucalyptus aromaphloia - Scentbark,
Acacia melanoxylon - Blackwood,
Acacia dealbata - Silver Wattle,
Indigofera australis - Austral Indigo,
Helichrysum dendroideum - Tree Everlasting,
Cybonotus priessianus - Austral Bear's-ear,
Typha domingensis - Bublush (Cumbungi).

Frank Harrap.

W.V.F.N.C.A. MALLEE WEEKEND.

Western Victorian field naturalists saw the Mallee emerging from drought at the WVFNCA meeting. On their way up to Mildura on the Friday night, Ballarat members watched wheat farmers sowing their crops in the headlights of their tractors in expectation of rain, which was fulfilled. Further north, gusts of wind stripped the topsoil into a pall of dust on the Saturday. As always, the Sunraysia Naturalists' Research Trust provided an excellent programme. Excursions were arranged to the Hattah-Kulkyne N.P. and to Meridian Lakes. This series of salt lakes south of Merbein supports a rich and varied population of birds, mainly waterfowl and waders, which are numbered in tens of thousands at the height of the season. Including a morning visit to Cowanna Bend on the Murray, highlights for the day were fork-tailed (or black) kite, whistling kite, purple-backed wren, white-backed swallows, bluebonnets and busy flocks of southern whiteface.

On Saturday night, four SNRT members - Ted Lawton, Howard Brown, Irvine Caldwell and Bob Corbould - showed the depth of their local knowledge and research, and their infinite patience

and skill as photographers, in a program of slides that gave an insight into the region - from the stars to underground spider burrows, covering flora, avifauna, Araneae and their changing environment due to man's intervention and the natural occurrences of drought, flood, fire and severe frost.

A visit to Hattah on the Sunday was marred for bird observing, by gusty, chilly winds, but many interesting botanical species were seen on the journey through the golden vineyards and citrus groves of Karadoc and Nangiloc, and into the Kulkyne. These included a rare stand of *Casuarina obesa*, one of only two in Victoria. The stand appears to be dying from seepage from irrigated land. Dried up lakes along the Chalka Creek overflow were green with herbage, but Lake Mournpoul, where we had lunch, still held a large volume of water. Along the creekbed were the tiny wild Mallee cucumbers, fanflowers and Hattah lilies. Some of the Black Box were in flower. Birds included a flock of peaceful doves, pink cockatoos, yellow rosella, Caspian tern and the everpresent pelicans. The wrens and honeyeaters stayed well hidden in the weather conditions. It was pleasing to see the regeneration of native trees, including *Callitris*, since conservation measures were undertaken by the SNRT and the area proclaimed a National Park. It was also dismaying to hear of land clearance in the Trentham Cliffs area, site of a previous meeting and so richly endowed with wildlife, and to hear of the removal of trees and shrubs around farmland at Meridian Lakes, where a natural belt of vegetation between the swamps and cultivated land would surely provide some protection and bind the edges of the highly mobile soil, quite a bit of which travelled home with us.

Margaret Rotheram.

THE IMPORTANCE OF RAINFOREST.

The following quotation from the U.K. "new Scientist" reminds us - if we need reminding - of the importance of rainforest and the enormous losses of species that may result from the current world-wide clearing of tropical rainforest. Insect species now estimated at 30 million.

J.B.S. HALDANE'S oft-quoted observation that God had an inordinate fondness for beetles has been given an entirely new dimension by the latest statistics from Washington's Smithsonian Museum of Natural History. Based on beetle studies in the forests of Panama, Brazil and Peru, T.L. Erwin and his colleagues suggest that the 1-2 million known arthropod species represent only a fraction of a worldwide total now calculated to be as high as 30 million.

Erwin estimates a total world-wide arthropod fauna of over 30 million species, not the 2-3 million which is commonly accepted. For comparison, it is perhaps worth bearing in mind that the world totals for plant and vertebrate species respectively are 250,000 and 21,000.

The arthropods include centipedes, millipedes, crustaceans, spiders and the other arachnid groups, but insects make up over 75 per cent of the total. This means that only just over 4 per cent of the world total number of insects have been described so far, distressing news for insect taxonomists who formerly believed that one third to one half had already been covered. If it is optimistically assumed that 10,000 arthropods are described every year, it will take nearly 3000 years to catch up!

Even more worrying is the conservation aspect. With over half of the world's insect species believed to be endemic to the 6 per cent or so of the earth's land surface that is covered by rainforest, and a good chunk of that destined to fall under the chainsaw before the end of the century, it seems that the number of extinctions may exceed a conservationist's worst nightmare.